

Healthcare provider implementation

Plymouth Hospitals NHS Trust implements Global Location Numbers for ready compliance and increased productivity

Plymouth Hospitals NHS Trust is the largest hospital in the UK's South West Peninsula. The Trust serves a population of 450,000 with a wider peninsula population of almost 2,000,000 people who can access its specialist services. The use of Global Location Numbers (GLNs) for location identification is one of the core enablers of the Department of Health's (DH) eProcurement strategy. By introducing GLNs now, the hospital is making sure it's on track with DH plans for compliance with GS1 standards. Add to this the productivity gains from having consistent and accurate location information.



By Theresa Gunn and Sandie Wills

Lack of consistency and confusion

The Trust's property management system was supplied by Micad, a GS1 UK Solution Partner, and contained 6,715 locations. The rules for room numbering weren't consistently applied, and where the physical numbers were attached to the doors, this led to problems when doors or doorframes were removed or relocated.

This resulted in extra work associated with renumbering locations when doors were moved, and looking for locations that had no identification label at all. The inconsistent numbering system also made it difficult to find locations without a floor plan.

"There was little or no consistency across the hospital's different software systems, with the same location being referred to differently in each system," explains Theresa Gunn, Quality Systems Manager. "The replication of data introduced the potential for information to be stored incorrectly; for example, when a cost centre changed, this information was not shared with other systems."

Matching a GLN to each location

Today, the Trust is introducing GLNs as a way of managing locations in a cost-effective and consistent way. The GLN offers a unique number that identifies every location, ultimately allowing the Trust's property management system to route information to other systems with no manual intervention.

The first stage of the implementation was to obtain a single organisational GLN prefix and Trust GLN in place.

"Since the Micad property management system holds records of all locations in the Trust, we worked to ensure that these records were 100 percent complete and accurate," says Sandie Wills, Scan4Safety Project Manager. "We supplied Micad with our GLN allocations and Micad uploaded this information into the system, matching a GLN to every location, site and space."

The Micad system also holds other relevant information for each location such as department, function, GLN, GLN creation date and GLN extension owner and budget code.

Plymouth Hospitals NHS Trust also worked with Dakota Healthcare, another GS1 UK Solution Partner, to develop a mobile printing solution to help the Trust begin labelling immediately. The Dakota Healthcare Android app uses a spreadsheet exported from Micad that enables the Trust to print and visually verify the GLN labels.

Dakota Healthcare also recommended an Android tablet, which meant the Trust staff can print the labels while on-site, making sure the correct label was attached to each location.

A step-by-step approach

The initial rollout prioritised the physical locations in non-clinical areas to receive GLNs. The next step is to engage with clinical staff to ensure the effective labelling of clinical areas. Following this, the Trust will work with its inventory system suppliers to achieve system compliance.

The final stage planned is to ensure that the high priority in-Trust systems are all using GLN identifiers. In fact, the Trust has approximately 240 systems in total. Once the national GLN registry is in place, data from Plymouth Hospitals NHS Trust will help populate it.

The Trust is also working with system suppliers and managers to ensure that their systems are GS1 compliant and use the Trust's GLNs.

Saving time with a simple scan

GLNs will help the Trust achieve standardisation across and interoperability between its various systems that use location-based data.



Now, each location can be accurately and swiftly identified with a GLN and barcode in place.



Using barcoding equipment from Dakota Healthcare, Plymouth could efficiently label each of its locations with a GLN encoded in a barcode.

“Our staff will save valuable time since labels with barcodes will be available at every location,” says Gunn. “A simple scan of the barcode is all that’s needed to identify the location quickly and accurately, instead of manually entering data.”

With GLNs, the Trust has now standardised the naming and labelling approach for its physical locations. “There will be much less time spent looking for rooms,” says Wills. “Productivity will increase since there will be much less ambiguity and confusion associated with ownership and occupancy of locations and rooms.”

Overall, Plymouth Hospitals NHS Trust has a complete record of its spaces with the needed governance in place to ensure future compliance.

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Theresa Gunn, Quality Systems Manage, Plymouth Hospitals NHS Trust

About the Authors



Theresa Gunn is the Quality Systems Manager at Plymouth Hospitals NHS Trust. She has 15 years of experience working with the Micad Property Management system.



Sandie Wills is the Scan4Safety Project Manager at Plymouth Hospitals NHS Trust. She is a Prince2 qualified project manager working on the Scan4Safety programme at the Trust. Prior to this position, Sandie worked as a Project Manager within IT for more than 10 years and has over 30 years of experience in the NHS.

About Plymouth Hospitals NHS Trust

Plymouth Hospitals NHS Trust is the largest hospital in the UK's South West Peninsula, providing comprehensive secondary and tertiary healthcare to almost 2,000,000 people who can access the Trust's specialist services. The area served is characterised by its diverse and aging population, giving Plymouth Hospitals NHS Trust the opportunity to innovate in services for the elderly.

www.plymouthhospitals.nhs.uk